
FIRST
ANNUAL SERMON.

1848.

THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST,
IN ITS BEING,

AND IN ITS

RELATION TO DIVINELY APPOINTED ORDINANCES.

27

THE SERMON

BEFORE

THE DIRECTORS

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Society,

FOR THE PROMOTION OF EVANGELICAL KNOWLEDGE,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING IN THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY,

Philadelphia, October 25th, 1848,

BY

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SERMON.



1 CHRON. XXII. 1.

“Then David said, This is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.”

It was by no means a secondary matter under the dispensation of the levitical law, to know *what* was the house of the Lord, and *what* was the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.

There was but one house, and one altar of burnt-offering. No sacrifice was accepted that was not brought to the door of the one, and sanctified by being offered upon the other. All that was peculiar to that dispensation was centered in that house and altar. All that pertained to an Israelite, as an Israelite, depended on his connection therewith. Hence the question between the Jews and Samaritans, as laid for decision before our Lord by the woman of Samaria; namely, whether men ought to worship at Jerusalem, or on Mount Gerizim, whether the true house and altar were in the one mount or the other, was a vital question to all who desired a share in the peculiar privileges of the ceremonial law. And hence the decision of that question had not been left to human appointments or conjectures. In every period of the history of the levitical dispensation, God had visibly declared where his house and what his altar was by manifest signs from heaven. When the tabernacle was set up and the altar therein, and all was consecrated according to divine appointment, then “a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”* It was the marvellous

* Ex. xl. 34.

signal whereby the God of Israel proclaimed in language too plain to be misunderstood, "This is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel."

And when, in place of the tabernacle of the wilderness, the more permanent and magnificent temple of Jerusalem was built, the same signal appeared; all the people saw the decision of the great question. "The fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And when all the children of Israel saw"—they signified that they well understood; "they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord."*

The dispensation of the law had a typical relation at all points to that of the Gospel. Its priesthood was typical, not indeed of our human ministry which is no priesthood; but of that priesthood of our blessed Lord in heaven, which alone gives our ministry any use, and the sinner's hope, the least consolation. Its temple, as is universally understood, was a grand type of the house of God, under the dispensation of Christ. And the question what that house is, should be regarded as a primary and vital question in reference to a Christian's participation in all that Christ did on earth, and is now doing in heaven.

The House of God under the gospel dispensation is no house made with hands. Whatever else may be said of its materials, of their preparation, or the cement that unites them, or the hand that puts them together, or of that which, when put together, makes them God's house or temple; the materials are the sons and daughters of the human family. Their union one with another, under a certain bond, and in

* 2 Chron. vii. 1 & 3.

a certain relation to the chosen corner stone which God hath laid in Zion, constitutes the present, only, house or temple of God. That house is identical with the Christian Church. St. Paul speaking of the church, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, calls it "the household of God," and describes it as built upon Jesus Christ, "in whom (he says) all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."*

Now to belong to the household of God, is certainly essential to all christian privileges and hopes. It is manifestly impossible that we should have any part in Christ, unless we are part of his household; that we should have any interest in his sacrifice, except we belong to his temple. But the temple of God, the house of God, and the Church of Christ are one. Hence it follows that there cannot be a true Christian where there is no membership in Christ's Church, any more than there could be an Israelite without any relation to the temple in Jerusalem; there cannot be any participation in the sacrifice of Christ where there is no union to his household, the church, any more than a man could share in "the burnt-offering for Israel," who was not "of Israel." It follows moreover, just as necessarily, (and to this we would draw especial attention) that as without membership in the Church of Christ, we can have no participation in Christ or his salvation; so if we be members indeed of his church, *we must have part in him and his salvation*. To be found in the church, and to be saved, are essentially connected. Whatever the church may be, and whatever may make us members thereof, it is Christ's living body; and the scriptures always represent those who belong to that body as being in Christ Jesus, precisely where St. Paul was so earnest that he might

* Ephes. ii. 20, 21.

be found at the last; and nothing can be more impossible than that a real member of Christ, a sinner found, at death, actually in him can be lost. We repeat it then, with special emphasis; membership in the Church of Christ, and salvation in Christ, are essentially connected, and commensurate.

We go further, whatever instrumentally makes us members of Christ's Church is essential to salvation, and is necessarily saving—simply because it unites us to Christ himself as members of his body. Therefore if any sacramental ordinance; if the sacrament of Baptism makes us any thing more than *visibly* or *professedly* members of the Church; if it be the instrument whereby we are made, not merely in the visible sign, but in the inward reality, members of the body of Christ; if every one who has received that sacrament is a member of Christ's body, the Church, then is he found in Christ—and then it is true, not only that without that sacrament we cannot be saved, but *with it, we cannot be lost*. Wherever you find the baptized, you find, according to such views, not only the true and only house and Church of the Lord our God, but those who have a saving portion in the great burnt-offering for Israel.

Baptism and salvation are as indissolubly connected in those views as our being in Christ, and our being in the peace of God. The saved are exclusively the baptized. The baptized are certainly the saved. These are consequences of that doctrine of baptism, of which we are speaking, which cannot be escaped. They follow of necessity from the vital union between the Church and Christ; from the oneness of membership in it, and membership in him. Hence the primary importance of the question in gospel, as well as in former times, *what is the house of the Lord our God?* what constitutes the Church of Christ? what makes us members thereof? Are the sacraments and the ministry so essential to the *being*

of the Church, that without them it is a nonentity? Is the sacrament of baptism so identical with membership in the Church, not visible merely, but spiritual membership in the body of Christ, that whoever is baptized is such member, and whoever is not baptized cannot be? If not, what are the relations of the visible and divinely appointed ordinances of the Church to the being and membership thereof? These are questions which we hope, without the need of any great length of discussion, satisfactorily to answer. And subjects more important to "evangelical knowledge;" more appropriate to the work of a society instituted for the promotion of such knowledge, most especially in these days, when with marvellous skill and subtlety of Satan, every sort of device is worked most diligently to cloud, and counterfeit, and destroy all truly evangelical knowledge, I know not where to find.

We must enter upon their consideration with the two certainties of which we have spoken plainly in sight, namely, whatever we make the Church, to be members is to be saved; not to be members is to be lost, because it is simply to be, or not to be, in Christ. And moreover, whatever we make the one instrument whereby alone we become members of Christ's Church, and so of Christ himself, be it the living faith in the heart, or the sacrament of baptism on the brow, that instrument is not only absolutely necessary, in every case, to salvation, but wherever applied must be saving, simply because in virtue thereof we are in Christ Jesus. And really when we have set before us these infinitely momentous consequences, of whatever view we take, we seem to have gone much of the way in answering the questions before us. For how hard it is, in view of all that have died in faith without having received the outward sign of Baptism, as many of the martyrs died, and then of all who have died

with that sign, as millions on millions of the most ungodly have died, how hard to believe that the sacrament of baptism is that essentially saving instrument of union to Christ? Not even the Romish apostacy, far as it has dared to avow the monstrous consequences which flow from her corruptions of christian doctrine, has ventured entirely to maintain the extreme results of assigning to a sacrament so easily received, so indiscriminately possessed, a necessity so absolute, and an efficacy so saving. What is the invention of a baptism "*in blood*" and "*in will*" (*in sanguine* and *in voto*, as Rome's standard writers speak,) but the confession of salvation *without a sacrament*, and thus a virtual denial of her doctrine of sacramental grace? What is the invention of additional sacraments to renew baptismal grace when sin has soiled its purity; the distinction between venial and mortal sins, with the convenient uncertainty and mutability of the dividing line; and when a baptized man, a man therefore in Christ, as she holds, has lived a life of ungodliness, though continuing in the communion of the visible church, what her invention of purgatorial flames to restore to that worker of iniquity the equivalent of his baptismal robe of righteousness, that he may be finally saved with the household of God, but the confession that in the full carrying out of her doctrine of baptismal union to Christ, there comes an extreme too monstrous to be nakedly exposed. She is bound to the honest avowal to that as, by her own declaration, every baptized man, except he be an infidel, or a heretic, or a schismatic, is in Christ Jesus, by a living union, every such man must have part in the salvation of Christ. His sacramental baptism saves him—for as long as that sign is on him, he is in the Church and in Christ—and to call in other sacraments; to bring in the fires of purgatory to make his baptism finally

saving, is to flinch from the direct consequences of her doctrine, and virtually to deny it.

We come now to one of the two main questions which we propose to answer in this discourse, namely,

I. In what consists the essential *being* of the Church of Christ; and consequently, what is *membership* in the same? We shall find it a shorter and easier question than some of the congregation may apprehend.

But let us mark well, it is not what is the Church in its apostolic appointments, but in its essential existence; not the polity, but the living thing; not what makes the Church a visible organization before the world, but what makes it the mystical body of Christ, before God.

The difference between the Church in its essential being before God, and in its divinely appointed mode of manifestation or visible profession before men, is precisely the same as the difference between the inward reality of communion with God, and the visible profession of that communion in the sacraments. All who come to the Lord's Supper we call *communicants*; we do not mean that all are communicants of the body and blood of Christ *in reality*. But we name them what they profess to be. And in the same way, we call the whole body of those who come to that sacrament, together with all the ordinances of God connected with their profession, *the Church*;—the body of Christ. But we do not therefore mean that all of them are really, spiritually, of the Church, or body of Christ. We name them what they profess to be. Professing to be communicants, we call them communicants. Professing to be Christians, we call them Christians. In baptism, professing to be regenerate, they are spoken of as regenerate in baptism. Professing, in the several ordinances of the Church, to be the Church, they are called the Church; although we do not forget the declaration of St. Paul: "He

is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.”* If this was the state of the case under the ceremonial, how much more, if possible, must it be under the more spiritual and inward dispensation. How emphatically should we keep in mind, that he is not a *Christian* which is one outwardly, neither is that *baptism* which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and the true, saving baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter ; and hence the Christian Church is not constituted of those who are Christians merely in the letter—in the baptism, which is outward in the flesh.

How then is it constituted ? We find in the narrative connected with the text a very convenient and striking illustration. A pestilence was raging among the people of Israel in the reign of David. He beheld the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. The angel “stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” David prayed that his hand might be stayed. The Lord commanded him to set up an altar on that floor. He did so, “and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings and called upon the Lord. And He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering.”† “When David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshold of Ornan, then (it is written) he sacrificed there ;”‡ that is, he continued to sacrifice there, notwithstanding (as the next verse says) “the tabernacle of the Lord and the altar of the burnt-offering were at that season at Gibeon.” Then David said, “*this is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for*

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

† 1 Chron. xxi. 14–26.

‡ v. 28.

Israel." The same evidence from heaven which had been given at the consecration of the tabernacle, that the house of the Lord was there, was now manifested unto David, that the house of the Lord was that open threshing floor.

The case of Jacob at Bethel is precisely similar. In the open field he sleeps. The vault of heaven alone is over him. God appears to him. He awakes and says, "Surely the Lord is in this place—this is none other but the house of God—and he named the place Bethel"—*house of God*.* Now, what made that open field or that naked threshing-floor the house of the Lord? Jacob's words afford precisely the answer, "*The Lord is in this place.*" The special presence of the Lord! It is *residence* in a place, not walls, that makes it our house. It is the *citizens*, not their edifices, that make the city.

Now, with this plain light from the Old Testament, as to what used to constitute the Lord's house, we open the New Testament to see what makes his house or church in these days. I find the house of God declared to be in every true servant of God; and that which gives him that character to be the indwelling of God's Spirit. "Know ye not that your body is *the temple* of the Holy Ghost, *which is in you.*"† I find next, the whole community of God's people called his temple. "Ye are the temple of the living God (said St. Paul to the Corinthians) as God hath said, *I will dwell in them and walk in them.*"‡ The indwelling of God made them his temple. And thus the same Apostle says to the Ephesians, "Ye are builded together, for an habitation of God, *through the Spirit.*"§ The Spirit abiding in them made them the habitation of God. Here we have precisely the similar case to that of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. The pre-

* Gen. xxviii. 11-19.

† 2 Cor. vi. 16.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

§ Ephes. ii. 22.

sence of God to David in that unvalled space, made God's house to be there. The indwelling of God by his Spirit in any human being makes him His temple. The same indwelling of the Spirit in the whole community of God's people, makes it all his temple—His Church. The parts are not made each a temple by being first united to the whole. But the whole communion becomes the whole temple or church, by the aggregation of the several parts, each being a temple in itself. God dwells in the community, and so makes it his house, by dwelling in each member thereof, and so making him a Christian and the habitation of God.

Thus we have found, by a very short process, the essential being of the Church—all that gives it a *spiritual*, and thus all that gives it a *real*, existence towards God. Nothing can be more simple. We ask where is the house of the Lord our God? The Scriptures answer, wherever is “the habitation of God through the Spirit,”—wherever his Spirit dwells. And thus the saying of Tertullian, in the third century, so much wondered at because not understood, is perfectly scriptural: “Wherever three are met together in the name of the Lord, there is the church”*—not a church in any outward equipment or visible organization; but the church, the habitation of God, in the highest sense of spiritual being. And why? simply because of the Lord's assurance. “*There am I in the midst of them.*” I dwell in them—they are thus my house, my church. And to the same effect writes St. Paul: “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”† In other words the bond which makes us all one body in Christ—one church, is

* Tertullian, lib. de exhort. Castitat. cap. vii. Ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici. Unusquisque enim sua fide vivit, nec est personarum acceptio apud Deum: Quoniam non auditores legis justificantur, sed factores.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

not an outward tie, but participation in the same inward life; not a visible sacrament or sign of baptism, but that baptism which the sacrament is not, and only signifies; *the being baptized by the Spirit, the drinking into one Spirit*," as the living branches drink into the life of the vine, and so are one body in it.

Thus we have ascertained wherein consists the being of the Church, and yet have scarcely alluded to the existence of such things as the sacraments, the ministry, or any outward order of the same. We have found that whatever the necessity of these, by divine appointment, to the *well-being* of the Church, they are not necessary as elements of its *being*; however necessary as means of establishing, extending, and continuing the Church, they are not parts of its essential construction.

The moment we get this view of the *being* of the Church, as quite another thing from the ordinances which God has connected therewith, the way is plain to the decision of the connected and important inquiry, *what is the divinely appointed instrument whereby we become members of the Church?* The simple answer is, whatever makes us individually the habitation of God, makes us collectively his habitation or Church. But that is the indwelling of his Spirit in each. How do we obtain that? Certainly not by becoming united to his Church. That, we have seen, is the consequence, not the cause, of that indwelling of the Spirit. How then! The branch obtains the life of the vine by being grafted on the vine. We obtain the Spirit of Christ by being brought unto, or by coming to Christ. Now if we do not become partakers of Christ by first becoming partakers of his Church; but if on the contrary, we are made members of the Church by first becoming partakers of Christ, the life coming from the vine and not from the branches; then it cannot be any act of the

Church whereby we are brought to Christ. The sacraments of the Church may signify, and outwardly seal, and promote, our coming; they cannot be that which takes us to Christ, any more than it is the house which builds the stones into its foundation. The question is, what is that instrumental agency whereby we are made partakers of Christ, and so of his Spirit and so of his Church? The Scriptures answer with one voice *Faith*; *Faith only*. “To whom coming (saith St. Peter) as unto a living stone—ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.”*—You see the house is *last*, not *first*; the order is not coming to the house or church, and being built up in it, and thus becoming living stones, and thus finally getting to Christ. But an order just the opposite. First coming to Christ—thus made living stones—then and therefore built up a spiritual house.

The Apostle proceeds—“Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone—and he that *believeth* on him shall not be confounded.”† In other words he that *by faith* is built upon that stone shall not be confounded. “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”‡ Why precious to you that believe and you only? Because by believing in him you become partakers of him, you are built upon him; you belong to that spiritual house which is the habitation of God, and cannot fall. Thus the whole order is this—a living faith brings us to Christ; by thus coming unto him we receive his Spirit to abide in us, and so are united to him by oneness of life. That Spirit in uniting us to the head unites us to all who have been united already in the same way. And thus we are members one of another in one body, which is the Church.

Now, my brethren, let me ask you to call to mind the position from which we set out, that whatever we make the

* 1 Pet. ii., 4, 5.

† V. 6.

‡ V. 7.

Church to consist in, to be found therein is to be saved, not to be found therein is to be lost; and that just because it is to be found, or not, in Christ. And again that whatever be the instrument whereby we are made members of the Church, outward ordinance, or inward faith, it is not only absolutely necessary to salvation, but must be absolutely saving. Taking the view we have given of what constitutes the Church, and what instrumentally unites us thereto, those positions are not only true, but exactly consistent with all else in the scriptures, and in religion. They are but another mode of saying, "He that believeth in Jesus shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Take any other view of the being of the Church, and of what instrumentally makes us members thereof; say that it is made up of all who are joined together in a visible fellowship by the bonds of outward sacraments and an apostolic ministry; that all the baptized and none else are its members; then look abroad over the world of those, who in the grave, or now alive, are the baptized; contemplate that exceedingly commingled multitude of tares and wheat, of true and false, of godly and ungodly, in view of the positions we have taken and which cannot be escaped, however, they may be concealed, and what an enormity do such views of the Church present.

Let us now proceed to the other question allotted for this discourse.

II. If the sacraments and other outward and visible ordinances of the Church are not essential elements of its being, *in what relation do they stand thereto?* Mark well the question, lest we be misunderstood. It is not what are the several *objects, uses, benefits*, towards the Church or the Christian for which the sacraments, &c. were ordained—but the much narrower question, what is the relation they

stand in toward the essential being of the Church, and consequently of the Christian.

We look back to the narrative of David on the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. In one verse we have him saying of that open floor, simply because God's presence was there; "This is the house of the Lord our God"—and in the next verse we read that he "set masons to hew stones to build (in that place) the house of God"—and afterwards we find the magnificent temple of Solomon erected on that very spot, and customarily spoken of, in the subsequent scriptures, as *the house of God*. How is this? Two houses in the same place—the invisible and visible? or the same house under different relations—first in its *invisible being*, made a temple by God's presence, next in its *visible form* of walls and courts and altars?

The plain truth is that when the stately sanctuary of Solomon was erected over and around the place which David long before had pronounced to be the temple of God, since the presence of God was no more there than it was before, it was no more really God's temple. Take away the walls and courts, and leave the divine presence, and the temple is there still. Of what use then were the walls and courts and altars, and all the imposing ceremonial connected therewith? We answer, they gave visibility to that otherwise invisible house of the Lord. They were its conspicuous notes and marks. They did not give it being, but they gave it visible, sensible being. God needed them not in order to recognize his temple; but man did. Thus there was a sense in which the outward and visible building was the house of the Lord, while the real house was there without it. It was the form of that spiritual house, and called therefore the house; as we call the visible man the man, when all we see is only the bodily

form of the unseen man. So we call our liturgy prayer, when it is only a form of prayer. The real prayer is quite another thing, which no eye sees but that of God. Words however are its signs and forms—and we call them therefore by its name, with no danger of being understood to mean that prayer must be where they are or cannot be where they are not.

Let us now apply what has been said of the temple of Jerusalem to illustrate the relation of the sacraments and other ordinances of the church, to the church itself.

During the interval between the death of Christ and the setting up of the visible church by the administration of baptism to the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, there was certainly a church. Since the beginning of the world God had always his house, his habitation through the Spirit, in this world. One hundred and twenty disciples, believers in Jesus, commanded by him to continue in Jerusalem till they should receive the promise of the Father, were gathered together in Jerusalem, in his name, and he, according to his promise, was in the midst of them. They were thus his temple. And presently the Lord visibly declared they were his temple, precisely as he declared the threshing floor of Ornan, or the tabernacle of Moses, to be his house. “There came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

But as yet the Church of Christ had no administration of sacraments. It was like the house of the Lord in the threshing floor of Ornan, when it had no walls. The baptism ministered before the death of Christ was not the sacramental baptism of the Christian Church. It was while the Jewish

dispensation was yet in being. The Lord's Supper had been administered to only eleven out of the hundred and twenty, and then while the Jewish dispensation still existed. The sacraments were in being only as appointments for a time to come. They had no hand in constituting the church that then was. But that church nevertheless was just as really the church of God, as it has ever been since. Composed of living stones, built upon the precious corner stone which God had laid, and being inhabited by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," it was in every essential respect, the temple of the living God.

But the temple or church, then made visible as such, only by miraculous signs which must be transitory, in order that it may come into contact with the world in which its work is to be done, must have a visible and permanent form or body. It is not enough that God knoweth them that are his. Man must see who profess to be his. An angel host may dwell among us in all the perfectness of their being, but until they put on some visible shape, we cannot be sensible of their presence. Man comes into contact with man, only through the means of a visible form—which is the body he lives in. The church can operate on the world only through a similar form. So then when the Apostles proceeded to put the church to its appointed work, they invested it with a body of visible ordinances, which the Lord had appointed, and such as by their fewness and simplicity were suited to a dispensation which was to embrace all nations. As soon as David had ascertained the house of the Lord, he set men to hew stones to build its walls. No sooner had the Lord declared by the manifestation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost that in those hundred and twenty disciples was his church, than the Apostles began to preach the word. Thousands

were the same day turned to the Lord, and were by faith, joined to Christ, and so to his Church. And what was thus done invisibly, they were next required to confess openly. They were *baptized* in the sacramental sign, as they had been already in the spiritual reality. Thus they became not more really members of Christ, but more visibly; as a King by his coronation, is no more a king than before he was crowned, but only more formally and declaratively.

But as baptism is only once in a Christian's life, a sacrament more permanently in sight was needed for the full visibility of the Church. The Lord had prepared and directed it. The Apostles added therefore to the baptized, the sacrament of communion in the body and blood of Christ. Thus the Church, with both the sacramental marks and signs which the Lord had ordained, and with a divinely appointed ministry preaching the pure word of God, was fully set up in its visible form, as before in its invisible being. "They that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

Now in all this account of the difference between the Church *as it is*, and the Church as it is *visible* in ordinances, we have had in view the language of our standards. When the object is to declare simply what the Church of Christ is, without reference to how it is known; the description is "*the blessed company of all faithful people*,"* in other words all believers in Jesus. But when the object is not only the spiritual *being* of the Church before God, but its visible form before men; what *indicates* as well as what *constitutes* it; then the Homily for Whit-Sunday says: "The true Church

* Communion office.

is an universal congregation or fellowship of God's faithful and elect people, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." So much for what it *is* in its essential constitution. Then the Homily proceeds: "and it hath always these *notes* or *marks* whereby it is known: Pure and sound doctrine, the sacraments ministered according to Christ's holy institution, and the right use of ecclesiastical discipline."* So much for what makes it visible.

Thus our standards place the sacraments and ministry in relation to the inward being of the Church, exactly where they put them as to the spiritual being of the individual Christian. A man is not qualified for the sacrament of Bap-

* The declaration of Bishop Ridley in the Conferences between him and Latimer during their imprisonment, are remarkably illustrative of the above passage from the Homilies. Ridley supposes the Romish adversary, whom he calls Antoninus, to say: "Without the Church (saith St. Augustine,) be the life never so well spent, it shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." To which Ridley answers by defining what the Church *is*—and how it is marked, and thus making no objection to the truth of the adversary's position, provided the Church spoken of were rightly understood. He says: "The holy Catholic or universal Church, which is the communion of the saints, the house of God, the city of God, the spouse of Christ, the body of Christ, the pillar and stay of truth; this Church, I believe, according to the Creed; this Church I do reverence and honor in the Lord—The marks whereby this Church are known to me in this dark world are these, the sincere preaching of God's word; the due administration of the sacraments; charity; and faithful observing of ecclesiastical discipline, according to the word of God. And that Church which is *garnished with these marks*, is in very deed that heavenly Jerusalem *which consisteth of these that be born from above*. Forth of this I grant there is no salvation." Soon after Bishop Ridley more particularly describing the constituency of the Church, says: "That Church which is Christ's body, and of which he is the head, standeth only of living stones and true Christians, not only outwardly in name and title, but inwardly in heart and in truth." Ridley's Works, Parker's Society Edition, pages 123 and 126.

Nothing can be plainer than the above distinction of Ridley's between the Church, as *consisting* of all, and only of those who are true Christians in heart and truth, and as made *known* or *visible* by the sacraments, &c.

tism, until he has been baptized; until he has received that inward grace, that baptism of the Spirit which the sacrament signifies. He must repent and believe—he must first be a Christian, and then receive the marks and notes of a Christian. But still he is said by the Church to be made *in baptism*, “a member of Christ, and a child of God,” because while his previous religious life was seen of God, the Church can know him only from the period of his *professing* a religious life. His becoming a child of God was really when he repented and believed in Jesus. His becoming such in the sight of the Church was when he *professed* repentance and faith in the sacrament of baptism. So we say a man receives the conveyance of an estate when he receives the signed and sealed title-deed, though he was really the owner from the time he paid for it. The human tribunal cannot take knowledge of the private transaction; but requires the visible instrument, and makes its date the beginning of ownership. Such is the case as necessarily in the Church as in the state. A man is made a member of Christ in baptism, who was a member before by a living faith, because then he receives the seal and signature of membership, by which only the Church can know him. The Church begins to be the Church before the eyes of men, when she becomes clothed with the outward ordinances which make her visible to men. A property comes to be mine in the view of the state when I receive the title-deed, however long I may have really and rightfully owned it before. When our Church is speaking of the time when one becomes a child of God, with reference to his title to be admitted to the sacramental union of the Church, she speaks, as in the catechism, of his baptism as that time; because then first he became known to her as professing to be a child of God. But when she speaks of the same with reference to

the judgment of Him who looketh on the heart, then, as every where in the Homilies, she leaves Baptism out of sight, and dates his becoming a member of Christ, and child of God, from the day of his becoming a penitent believer. And this is the key that explains not only our own standards, but what to many seems a contradiction in many of our oldest and best divines, who have been often quoted as teaching a doctrine concerning baptismal regeneration and justification which they have expressly denied and condemned.*

* For want of a due observance of the key given above, none of the great divines of the Church of England has been more misunderstood, than Bishop Beveridge. The Tractarian writers have put him into the list of the advocates of their doctrine, of the spiritual and saving efficacy of the sacrament of baptism. Their *Catena*, on the subject, contains extracts from his works, in proof. It has been the custom of their followers and sympathizers, to quote him on that side, as if his agreement with them could not be questioned. And yet no man has ever more positively denied their favorite dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, or more plainly taught the precise reverse. His sermon on "*The new Creature in Christianity*," (2 Cor. v ; 17,) is full of the doctrine we have taught above, and is precisely such, in tone and sentiment, as the Romish school among us are used to loathe and ridicule. For example, he says :

"Again, we may observe from hence, that as he who is not *in Christ*, is not a new creature ; so on the other side, he who is not a new creature, is not *in Christ* : For the Apostle saith expressly, '*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*' And therefore men may pretend what they will, and make what they can of Christ's religion, *they may be baptized into his name, and continue members of his Church, &c., &c., &c., and yet after all, unless they become new creatures*, they have nothing to do with him : they do not truly believe, and so have no part or interest in him. For *they are not in him*, and so have no ground to expect any thing at all from him. This is a thing which I heartily wish ye would all take special notice of, and remember as long as ye live—All that are *in Christ* are sure to go to heaven ; the members must needs be where the head is. But none it seems can go thither, but only such as are made *new creatures*. And by consequence, all that are not such, may be confident they are not in Christ, they are no true Christians whatsoever they may pretend. And this suggests unto me another thing, even what a miserable condition they are in, who are not converted and made new creatures. For such, as the Apostle speaks ; '*Are without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having*

¶ And now, in the concluding part of this discourse, lest in what we have said concerning the relation of the outward order to the inward being of the Church, we should seem, in any degree, to favour that neglect of ordinances to which some minds in avoiding the opposite extreme of undue reliance on them are so apt to run, we must take you once more

no hope, and without God in the world. And how miserable must they needs be who are in such a condition as this; they are without Christ, being no more concerned in him, than as if he had never come into the world. They are aliens to the Commonwealth of Israel, *foreigners to the true Church of God*; they have no portion or inheritance in it, as not being naturalized and made free denizens of it; they are strangers to the covenant of promise, having no interest in any of the promises that God made to mankind in the new covenant, &c., and all because they are not in Christ, in whom alone the Church is founded.

All this the reader will observe is said of those *who have been baptized*, and *are members of the Church* (visible) in the popular sense of that expression, as appears in the beginning of the extract. *Baptized*, yet not in Christ—not members of his body—foreigners to the true Church of God—without God—having no part in any gospel promise. Such is Bishop Beveridge on baptismal regeneration.

And to make his views the plainer, he gives us a valuable comment on John xv., 2. ‘Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.’ He supposes it to be objected that in this passage the fruitless baptized person is called a *branch in Christ*. And he says the verse “is not to be so understood as if any fruitless branch was really *in him*, but only that it *seemeth* to be so.” (*Visibly, professedly*, not really.) According as he himself explains in a parallel case. In one place he saith, “*Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.*” Matt. xiii., 12. How can that be? How can a man have and not have? And how can he that hath nothing, have any thing taken from him? This looks like a contradiction; but he himself clears it in another place, by saying, “*Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*” Luke viii., 18. So here—“Every branch *in me*,” that is, every branch that *seemeth to be in me*, and beareth not fruit, *he taketh away*, so that it shall not so much as seem to be in him. For that this is the proper meaning of the place, appears from what follows: “*I (saith he) am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.*” For hence it is manifest, that as no man can do any good without him, so no man can abide really in him, but he brings forth much fruit, and therefore is “*a new creature.*”—Beveridge’s Works, Series xix.

to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and the temple built thereon.

That magnificent temple, with all its various ceremonial appurtenances was, as we have seen, not the house of the Lord, but, only the visible form of that house, and for that reason only was called the temple. But it must be noted emphatically that as a form, it was *all divinely appointed*. As the tabernacle was made by Moses according to the pattern which God had showed him in the Mount; so the temple was built by Solomon, after a pattern which David his father had received of the Lord, and of which David said to him: "all this the Lord made me understand, in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."* The altars and courts and walls of that structure did not make it the house of the Lord, but they were as much of divine command as if they did. The *form* was not the *being*, but God appointed that form for that being, and no man could put them asunder without profaneness. If the one was very subordinate to the other, both were sacred; both to be revered as nothing of man's ordaining should ever be.

We turn again to the visible ordinances of the house of God, under the gospel. They are very few and simple as suits the more spiritual aspect, and the more active work of a Church which must be as much at home in the wilderness as in the city, on the march of missionary invasion, as in the oldest and most fixed dwelling place of Christianity. The Jewish ritual was for a single nation and a narrow territory. The work of that dispensation was in no sense aggressive. It was to preserve, not to spread the knowledge of God—a light to be kept within the veil of the sanctuary, not to be carried abroad into surrounding paganism. It was a sentinel

*1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12 and 19.

on the walls; a witness to testify; a prophet to be ever pointing towards the more perfect dispensation. Thus stationary, it could bear the weight of cumbrous ordinances. But the christian dispensation is for the length and breadth of the earth. Its business is conquest; breaking down the kingdom of Satan; making captive all nations to Christ; never to be stationary till that work is done. On such an errand, the Church like the first Apostles must carry little weight, nothing but staff and scrip. The water, the bread, and the word; Baptism, the Supper of the Lord, and the trump of the Gospel are all her equipments. These are the notes and marks which God has made as essential to her divinely appointed visible form, as the dwelling of his Spirit in the hearts of his people is essential to her invisible being.

There is nothing more foolish than to suppose that because the exterior of the Church is not the Church, because the ordinances of religion are not religion, they may be treated with little regard. Do those who are prone to such thoughts, imagine the same with regard to another form; that which makes their own being a visible being—namely, their own bodies? God has joined the soul and body of man together in this life, by a bond which only death is permitted to break. No man supposes that his body is his life; he knows that the soul is essentially the man; but he knows that the soul is an inhabitant of this world, only as long as that body is its habitation; that it can give no sign of life nor hold any communication with this world, but by that bodily form. The ordinances of the senses and of speech and motion are its *visible being*, though not its *being*. Their actings and reactings one upon another are continual and powerful. The care of the one requires the constant keeping of the other in health and vigour. It is the madman that says, the body is

not the spirit, and therefore I will not care for it. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

And in the same way, God has joined together in this life, the spiritual being of his Church and a certain body of divinely instituted ordinances, without which latter the Church is permitted to have no fixed habitation in this world, nor any means of manifesting itself as a Church of God, in the sight of the world. And while it is a most important truth that these are not religion, but only its forms, we must maintain that precisely in proportion as they are neglected by any branch of the visible Church, must the life of true piety therein be damaged. True we can easily suppose a servant of God with the word in his mind, and the spirit of Christ in his heart, separated by divine Providence from all public and social means of grace, and yet living unto God in the highest spiritual health, the Lord working in him independently of those means of grace from which the Lord has separated him. But let him be returned to the bosom of Christian fellowship, and then if he wilfully come not to the public sacrifice of prayer and praise, and neglect the ministry of the word, and the sacrament of communion in the atonement of Christ, he must decline in grace, his inward evidence of being in Christ is lost. His confession of Christ before men is effaced. However he may hope that his private life will shed the influence of a Christian example on those around him, that life is but an evil example of the manifest inconsistency of professing to be a follower of Christ and yet wilfully dishonouring institutions of Christ, His divinely appointed means of grace, which are as binding in their place as any precepts of the Scripture.

Still stronger appears the case when we speak of the Church instead of the individual Christian. There is such a

thing as destroying the spirit of religion in the visible Church by overloading the simple institutions of Christ with rites and ordinances of human invention. But there is another extreme not less fatal. Two ways there are of dishonouring the Gospel and doing damage to our own souls, as regards the divinely instituted ordinances of the Church. We may *undervalue* and *overvalue* them. By a diminutive estimate of their use, you deny them the place which God has given them. By an exaggerated estimate, you appoint them a place which God has denied them. In a misguided zeal for the inward life of all religion, you may do great injustice to its ordained means of growth. Out of an inordinate concentration of interest upon the sacramental signs and means, you may grievously dishonour the nature and hinder the growth of inward piety. Make the sacraments, in effect, identical with the communication of grace, and we cannot *undervalue* them, in that respect, for thus they are not what God made them. Make them only signs and effectual means of grace, depending on the faith of those who come to them and we cannot *overvalue* them, except we give them a higher place than the ministry of the *word of God*.

We must carefully guard against both the extremes which I have adverted to. Which is the worst I have no wish to decide. But I see not why the one error should be supposed the result of a specially reverential spirit, and the other of an irreverent mind. If I find a man who out of a pious fear of leading sinners away from Christ and the spiritual power of godliness to a resting in its more lifeless form, unduly and injuriously depreciates the sacraments in comparison with the preaching of the gospel, I see not that I may not attribute his error to an humble reverence for his Master, at least as much as that of the man who out of an earnest zeal for the

visible Church, so exalts the sacraments as to change their whole character from signs of grace to grace itself; so magnifies the ministry of the Church, under the name of a sacrificing priesthood, as not only to deprive the preaching of the word of its rightful honour and value, but to put the ever-living priesthood of Christ, almost out of sight, and make the coming of a sinner to sacraments ministered by an apostolic priesthood, to be all that is meant by coming to him. I see no godly reverence in this. Sacraments which point me and help me to Christ, I understand and reverence and love as God's own means of grace. Sacraments which say they are Christ to me, which profess to be able to give me grace by virtue of an endowment residing in them or the Church; sacraments and ministries which thus stand in the way of my feeling the need and the preciousness of a direct and constant communication between my soul and the present intercession of Jesus at the right hand of God, independently of all ordinances and all human intervention, are sacraments and ministries most sadly perverted, over which, in that aspect, godly reverence has only to mourn such dishonouring of the Gospel and of Christ.

There is the form of godliness, and there is the power; both of God. Each has its peculiar importance. The great evil is in confounding them; putting one for the other; or so identifying them as to take as certain the presence of both where we have either. The word is but the form of truth, as the sacraments are but forms of life, and the Scriptures give us at least as much warrant to suppose that the former is always influential in the communication of grace as the latter; but just as we make the word dependent for efficacy on the state of mind in the recipient, so are the sacraments. Precious means and efficacious means of grace they

are to the believer, by which it pleases God to carry on his work already begun. To those who come to them without the grace of a living faith, they are not covenanted means of grace. It is not sacraments that bring us to Christ, but faith in the heart, which brings us to him in sacraments, and independently of sacraments. Independently, first, that it may work in them, and by them, afterwards.

Great care must we take lest in placing these divinely ordained and precious means and signs, in their right place of most reverent estimation, our minds get to resting too much upon them, instead of passing through them to the clearer seeing of Christ and the more vigorous apprehending, by faith, of all his promised grace; so making them *objects* instead of *mediums*; as if a man should use his spectacles to be looked *at*, instead of looked *with*. Great care must we take lest we so hedge up the communion of our souls, with Christ to the single avenue of outward and ministerial means of grace as to limit in the least that habitual walk of faith wherein it is the believer's privilege and life to be always going directly and most freely to his Saviour, as well in his daily exercises of heart as in the solemnities of the sanctuary; or so as to place in any secondary rank among means of grace, that great instrument of God in awakening a dead world, and sanctifying a believing heart, the inspired word, preached by Christ's ambassadors; read, and pondered, and prayed over by the sinner.

And now, in a concluding word or two, I must beg you, my brethren, to bear distinctly in mind that in what has been said, we have left entirely out of view many important questions connected with the exterior polity of the church, such for example as the scriptural form of its ministry. Your attention has been confined to two points, the essential being

of the church, and the relation thereto of its ordinances, with which those other matters, confessedly of great interest, have no necessary connection. What has been said will be misunderstood, unless this restriction be remembered.

We have been inquiring after the House of the Lord, not of one dispensation merely, but of all dispensations, the house of many mansions, in which the saints of all ages since the advent of Christ are one body with the saints of all ages from the first promise of a Saviour to a ruined world; the house in which David, and Jacob, and Enoch are united with Paul and the whole general assembly and Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven; in other words, “the Holy Catholic Church—the Communion of Saints.” We have found it in the whole blessed company of those who, whether among the quick or the dead, are built upon Jesus Christ, by faith, and so are inhabited by his Spirit. These have all *one Lord, one faith* living in the heart, and *one baptism* in the renewal of the Holy Ghost. I know no Catholic Church but this. To gather sinners into its blessed fellowship, and to build them up in its faith, is the great work for which our ministry is created. Nothing is of any value in the visible Church, but as it bears upon that. To promote that one object through the dissemination of books, teaching the unadulterated truth as it is in Jesus, and, in connection with the institutions of our own branch of the visible household of faith, is the single design of the Society whose annual sermon I have now preached. Greatly, indeed, is it needed in our communion in these days. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with it always to give it wisdom, and courage, and strength, and zeal, and every blessing. *Amen.*

